

Wolfville Historical Society Newsletter

Founded in 1941



VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

DATE: MARCH 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the Board and standing committees, warm greetings to all new and returning members of the Society!

At the AGM on 23rd January, a new twelve-member Board was elected: six of the members are new to the Board. As those who attended the AGM will be aware, the financial situation of the Society is not as perilous as it appeared to be in the early autumn of 2012. John Brown's summary can be found below.

However, like similar groups that operate community museums, the Society still faces a number of challenges: retaining its existing members and attracting new members, particularly among young people and those working full-time; and, during the summer months when the museum is open, finding ways to attract more visitors and encouraging repeat visits.

The new Board has already begun to implement the recommendations of the special committee set up in the autumn of 2012. We have advertised for a Manager-Curator, to begin work at the start of May, and have received a large number of promising applications. We have seven new or re-constituted volunteer committees established (Finance, Programs, Membership, Communications and Randall House Management). Randall House will reopen in June, and we plan to have some wholly new or re-designed exhibits to attract visitors during the summer months.

The Board has also begun to plan for a special series of events to be held in 2014, to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I and particularly to investigate the impact that the outbreak of war had on Wolfville and the surrounding area. We feel that this is a "living history" topic that can engage not only older people but also younger people interested in what the Valley was like in the early 1900s, and what changes were brought about by the outbreak of war. One major aspect of the duties of the new Manager-Curator will be to work with Acadia, local schools, and various community organisations to develop interest in this project.

The Society has started the process of renewing itself and rebuilding membership: a separate Membership Form is being sent out with this Newsletter. A sincere thank-you to all those who have already renewed for 2013, or signed on for the first time. Please also consider a Sustaining Membership (\$100; tax receipt issued). We are very grateful to the Town of Wolfville for its continued financial support of the Society; and to Bishop & Company Chartered Accountants Inc. (Dykeland Street), who make their boardroom available to us for monthly Board meetings.



ANTHONY HARDING
Our New President

THE NEW BOARD

Officers:

Anthony Harding *President*
Martin Hallett *V-President*
Hilary Sircom *Secretary*
Jim Laceby *Treasurer*
John Brown *Past President*

Members:

Michael Bawtree
Elizabeth Browne
Wendy Elliott
Anne Hope
Andria Lehr
Christine Lynch
Krystal Tanner

Archivist:

Heather Watts

Memorial Foundation

Trustees:

Gordon Haliburton
Patricia Townsend
Patricia Williams

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: A SUMMARY

The Annual General meeting of the Wolfville Historical Society was held in Wolfville's Town Hall Council Chambers, on 23rd January, 2013.

Acting President John Brown introduced Mayor Jeff Cantwell, who said a few words and commented that he was glad to see the renewed vigor in the Society.

A vote of thanks was made to the former Curator, Bonnie Elliott, for her productive six years of involvement with Randall House.

The financial report and other written reports were accepted. John Whidden spoke briefly about each of the six members or friends of the Society who died in 2012.

Under New Business, John Brown introduced the Ad Hoc Committee's report, and it was suggested that the incoming board should have a chance to consider its recommendations and bring a plan of action to a later meeting. The report was tabled and committee members commended for their work.

The Nominating Committee brought in a new slate of Officers and Board Members. Outgoing members were thanked for their work and particular gratitude was expressed to John Brown for taking over as President and Treasurer at short notice.

Hilary Sircom *Secretary*

OUR FINANCIAL POSITION

After a period last year when our finances were judged to be in poor shape, we were able in January to advise the Town Council and the AGM that the picture had improved rather handsomely. We achieved increases in revenue, including donations and additional grants, and we reduced expenditures, including savings due to a paid staff resignation, and very frugal management procedures. Our year-end statements showed total revenues of \$55,462, and total expenditures of \$46,169, giving a surplus of \$9,169, and a balance in our operating account of \$15,691: the latter figure including funds set aside in previous years for projects not yet completed. For this new year, we will have to work hard to obtain grants, which make up the lion's share of our revenues, and allow us to hire summer staff. The support of the Town has been significant over the past 6 years, the grant of \$10,000 being about 15 to 20 % of our revenue. We understand it will continue in 2013. Other grants have been applied for, and we must now await the outcomes.

This year has begun with a nice show of membership renewals, exceeding \$1,000. We thank all those who have already stepped up to the plate.

John Brown *Past-President*

COMMITTEES

The following Standing Committees have so far been established:

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Jim Laceby (chair), Derek Watts

COMMUNICATIONS:

Membership Sub-Committee: Elizabeth Browne, Derek Watts

Newsletter Sub-Committee: Michael Bawtree, Elizabeth Browne, Wendy Elliott, Anne Hope

PROGRAMS COMMITTEE: John Whidden, Beth Keech, Andria Lehr

RANDALL HOUSE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Jan Baldwin, Christine Lynch, Heather Watts

Collections Sub-Committee: Jan Baldwin, Krystal Tanner, Heather Watts

Garden Sub-Committee: The Randall House Gardeners

EVENTS

Christmas Party

The Society's annual Christmas Party was held at the gracious home of Maxine McCuaig on December 13th, 2012. Members brought a superb variety of delicious food, and wine and other beverages flowed. Dal Browne entertained on the piano, and there was a guest appearance by Michael Bawtree, who gave us a rousing performance of Noel Coward's *The Stately Homes of England*, adding an extra verse which he assured us had been composed by Noel on a little-known visit to Wolfville:

*An heiress, a theatre man, an entrepreneur, a prof
Some of us rich and some adrift
All exercising greed or thrift:
Here we stand, the four of us,
And there are so many more of us
Owners of our Heritage Homes:
We're proud to have them but - Good Lord! -
They fleece us out of bed and board:
They always need some more re-roofing -
Endless weather-proofing:
Still they leak and still they freeze
And still the gardening rots our knees
Till one of these days we'll have to sell
And someone else will have to do what we've been doing
|And keep renewing
Before it all goes to hell!*

*The Heritage Homes of Wolfville
We carefully protect:
We're conscious that without us
They'd one by one be wrecked.
We remember that dear old cottage small
Whose owner demolished it wall by wall
Assuring us there was rot
In the corner-posts
Which manifestly was what
There probably was not:
The older ones among us
Have seen that 'anything goes' -
Instead of the old De Wolfe House
We've Pete's and Tim's and Joe's:
But if all of us feel the town's appeal
Is worth preserving right,
Let's fight for the Heritage Homes of Wolfville!*

February 20th Meeting and Talk

The President welcomed the audience and spoke briefly of the Society's developing plans. Members of the Membership Sub-Committee were on hand at the meeting to process new and renewed memberships.

Dr. Julian Gwyn then spoke to the Society and guests. His talk, titled "Comfort Me With Apples", was a survey of the apple industry in the Valley between 1863 and 1963, the first century of the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association. Dr. Gwyn outlined the rise and decline of an industry which focused primarily on exports to Britain and thrived when times were good, but was unable to adapt successfully to changing circumstances. Specifically, growers continued to operate on the basis of low price of traditional varieties, while ignoring changing tastes and the desire for quality. In addition, growers rejected repeated efforts to create a co-operative marketing agency which might have worked more to the growers' benefit rather than that of the exporters. Today's apple industry is but a shadow of what it was a century ago.

On a more positive note, Dr. Gwyn described the efforts made by apple growers to establish the federal experimental station in Kentville, and the contributions made by its scientists in developing new strains and new methods of increasing the longevity of the fruit.

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Randall House Museum

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“What’s past

is prologue . . .”

William Shakespeare

*“Those who cannot
remember the past are
condemned to repeat it”*

George Santayana

We're on the web and in
colour!



Wolfville Historical Society

RAYSKI HOUSE WINS AWARD

A Grand Pre couple, owners of the Rayski House, Old Post Road, were declared winners of an award for Nova Scotia’s built heritage in 2012, by the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia. Wilhelmus and Paulien Peters received their honour at a ceremony at Province House on Feb 22.

The Rayski House, an elegant circa 1880 French Empire Style house, was winner in the Residential category. The house is within the boundaries of the newly designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.



The first people known to have lived in it were the granddaughters of Nathaniel Brown, a Massachusetts Loyalist.

The Peters knew the house and its previous owner for many years and seized the opportunity to purchase when it came on the market despite its poor condition.

Over a 2½ year span, the Peters and their family restored the home to its original glory. Heritage elements were either conserved or replaced with materials in keeping with the period of the home and necessary modern updates were done sensitively. They plan to offer it as a short to medium term rental.

SPRING PROGRAM OF TALKS

Wednesday March 20th at 2 p.m. in Wolfville Firehall (unless otherwise notified)

Lorraine Vassalio is co-owner and operator of Avondale Sky Winery in Avondale, Hants County. She will talk to us about the development of the winery, and moving an old church from Walton by barge to serve as the winery’s customer centre.

Wednesday April 17th at 2 p.m. in Wolfville Firehall (unless otherwise notified)

Brenda Trofanenko is a Canadian Research Chair in Education, Culture and Community, and an Associate Professor at Acadia University. She will speak to us about history, heritage and the role of museums.